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CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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GUY P. JONES
Editor

THE VALUE OF LABORATORY TESTS FOR WATER

Many individuals desire information relative to the value of laboratory tests for water but requests for examinations of water supplies are very often not based upon reason. There is a general misunderstanding regarding the value of laboratory tests, and in an effort to conserve the work of the laboratory in the war emergency, an effort is being made to reduce the number of requests for unnecessary examinations. Little useful information may come from a single test made without knowledge regarding the source of the water sample, the nature of the surroundings, the cleanliness of the container, the temperature and elapsed time in transit, and the method of taking the sample.

All water samples for laboratory examination must be taken with the observance of careful procedures, and they should be taken preferably by an individual who is trained in sanitation.

At the present time, laboratory tests are not made routinely by the State Laboratory. Only in extreme emergencies, when cases of communicable diseases may be involved, are such tests performed in the laboratory.

It should be understood that water may be undesirable for drinking purposes because of unpalatable tastes due to decaying vegetable matter in spring water or because of salts in well water. Furthermore, the supply may be turbid and have an undesirable appearance. Nevertheless, these are but matters of taste and appearance and not matters of health. Laboratory tests are not involved. As a matter of fact, water may be actually unsafe from very few causes. The presence of disease-producing bacteria or of harmful mineral ingredients might

make the water unsafe for drinking purposes. In so far as mineral content is concerned, never in the history of California has a natural California water been found that would be harmful by reason of mineral content, except water in certain desert localities.

Bacteria in water supplies, that are capable of producing diseases, are very few in number of species. Whenever they are present, they must have come from a previous human case of the disease, and they are never present in water, except when it is freshly polluted with human sewage.

In this country, typhoid fever and dysentery are the only diseases that may be contracted from water. The bacteria causing these diseases can not be detected in water by laboratory methods even when they are present.

The laboratory tests would show only sewage pollution and would not reveal specific disease germs involved. Since the test would not distinguish between pollution of human and animal origin, and since contamination from animal sources is not capable of producing disease, greater importance is attached to an investigation of the source of the water, with possibilities of human contamination than to laboratory tests.

If the safety of well or spring water is suspected, an investigation should be made of the surroundings. If there is no privy or cesspool within 75 feet of a well, pollution is practically impossible, and no laboratory test is needed to establish the safety of the water. Even dead animals in water do not affect its safety. It is not pleasant to think of having drinking water so polluted, but disease is not caused by it. A well on a farm with a privy within 10 feet can be polluted

only by individuals living on the farm. If a case of typhoid fever appears there, the well in itself is not to blame, but the typhoid case or typhoid carrier that appears in the immediate vicinity may contaminate the water. The first case of typhoid in the family must have received the infection from some source other than the water supply.

Following is the procedure when a water supply is under suspicion: If the source is a public water supply, consult the local health officer. If the source is a spring or a well removed a safe distance from the possibility of human contamination, the matter may be dismissed. If the source is a well on the owner's premises, the location of the well with respect to privies, cesspools and barns should be investigated. If too close to any of these, the location should be changed. All wells should be protected from surface drainage. If the source is a well and there is a possibility of sewage contamination from sources outside the family, a letter should be written to the State Department of Public Health giving full information regarding the surroundings and the reasons for suspecting the water supply. In such cases proper advice will be sent.

The material in this article is taken from Special Bulletin No. 11, Water and Sewage Laboratory of the State Department of Public Health.

HOME-CANNED FOODS MAY BE DANGEROUS

The State Department of Public Health is distributing a leaflet entitled, "If You Eat Home-canned Foods, Read This." This leaflet states that home-canned vegetables, fish, fruits, meats, and animal products can be eaten without danger of botulism, if simple precautions are observed as follows:

1. Never eat home-canned vegetables, meat, or fish, even in tiny amounts, without first boiling the food for at least 15 minutes after removing it from the container. This must be done because it is not possible to tell that the food is capable of causing botulism by looking at it or smelling it. If the food is poisonous, even the tiniest amount may cause death.
2. If in doubt about fruits, remove them from the container and boil them. The odors of decomposition will warn you.
3. Never eat any canned food which shows mold growth or appears in any way to be abnormal, such as having a bad odor or coming from a bulged container.
4. Do not feed canned foods suspected of being spoiled to poultry, pets, or other animals.

Copies of the leaflet can be obtained in quantity by writing to the California State Department of Public Health at 612 Phelan Building, San Francisco.

THE KENNY METHOD OF TREATMENT FOR INFANTILE PARALYSIS

The National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis at 120 Broadway, New York City, has published a report of the Kenny method of treatment for infantile paralysis, copies of which will be sent to the medical, nursing or physical therapy profession upon request to the Foundation. The report has been prepared by Wallace H. Cole, M.D., Professor of Surgery and Director of the Division of Orthopedic Surgery, University of Minnesota; John F. Pohl, M.D., and Miland E. Knapp, Clinical Instructor of Orthopedic Surgery and Clinical Assistant Professor of Radiology and Physical Therapy, respectively, at the same institution.

The study of the treatment of anterior poliomyelitis advocated by Miss Elizabeth Kenny of Australia has been conducted under grants from the Foundation at the Medical School of the University of Minnesota. As early as December of 1941, the Medical Advisory Committees of the Foundation officially endorsed Miss Kenny's treatment for poliomyelitis in the acute stage and recommended the preparation of a manual describing the essential principles and details of the method. The authors of the manual have observed the Kenny method with its originator and her assistants during the two-year period of the grant, and their conclusions of the principles involved and the technique used are set forth in this manual.

Health officers and public health nurses who have not received copies of the publication should, by all means, obtain them from the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis at the address given above.

A.P.H.A. TO MEET IN ST. LOUIS

The annual meeting of the American Public Health Association will be held in St. Louis, October 27th to 30th. Meetings of related organizations, including the Health Education Institute are scheduled for Sunday and Monday, October 25th and 26th. The Institute on Public Health Education will have for its theme "Community Organization for Health Education." Round table sessions will discuss health education in a large urban area, a smaller urban area, an urban-rural area, and a rural area.

Among other organizations that will meet concurrently are the American School Health Association, the International Society of Medical Health Officers, conferences of State Sanitary Engineers, Municipal Public Health Engineers, State and Provincial Public Health Laboratory Directors, State Directors of Health Education, State Directors of Public Health Nursing and the American Social Hygiene Association.

The usual section meetings will be held. The preliminary program will be announced in August, a large part of which will be devoted to civilian defense and public health in time of war.

LAWYERS INVESTIGATE DELAYED REGISTRATION

A committee, consisting of Carey McWilliams, Chairman, Kurtz Kauffman, Robert S. Morris, Jr., and Fred Okrand of Los Angeles, has made a report of an investigation on birth certificates to the Los Angeles Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild. The investigation was prompted by the fact that industrial workers, seeking employment in war industries, are required to produce proof of citizenship in order to obtain employment, and thousands of them are unable to prove citizenship because of the fact that their births had not been registered.

The report refers specifically to the difficulties encountered by residents of California who were born in other States, but who are unable to secure delayed registration of their births in California courts. Reference is made particularly to opinions rendered by Judges Emmet H. Wilson and Clarence M. Hansen, of the Los Angeles Superior Court, in which portions of the California law to establish fact of birth of residents of California born outside of the State were declared unconstitutional.

The committee recommends that the United States Employment Service be urged to take the initiative in inducing war industries to adopt a uniform policy as to the type of proof of citizenship deemed satisfactory. The recommendation was further made that the State Bar of California be urged to undertake an investigation to determine the extent to which unlicensed persons have been and are trafficking in this situation, particularly to investigate the charges that war workers have paid fees for the purpose of obtaining birth certificates, and that these fees have not been refunded when no birth certificate was obtained; also to determine whether or not concerns of this type are engaged in the unlawful practice of the law or the improper solicitation of legal service.

A third recommendation urges the presiding judge of the superior court to invite the Los Angeles County Counsel, the Public Defender and a representative of the Unlawful Practice Committee of the State Bar to determine whether it will be possible for the County Counsel or the Public Defender to provide free legal advice and assistance to needy applicants for war industry jobs, so that their petitions to establish fact of birth may be handled expeditiously and without the payment of legal fees.

It was recommended also that the United States Employment Service and the principal war industry plants in the State be notified of the fact that the Division of Immigration and Housing at 505 State Building, Los Angeles, can assist, free of charge, to secure out of State birth certificates.

The committee also recommends the study of present legislation, to simplify registry of birth certificates so as to eliminate the expensive establishment of fact of birth procedure.

FRAUD IN BIRTH CERTIFICATES

The tremendous demand for birth certificates upon the part of individuals who have none has resulted in gross imposition upon the credulous. This is particularly true of residents of California who were born in other States, and who are not familiar with the vital statistics laws in their States. They are inclined to rely upon certain individuals, many of whom are notary publics, who advertise that they will secure birth certificates from other States.

In Los Angeles recently, a woman notary public was arrested following her action in obtaining a fraudulent birth certificate for a shipyard worker. Although the shipyard worker stated to the notary that he was born in Massachusetts, he received a birth certificate which gave his birth place as Illinois. Apparently, the notary had secured affidavits from two residents of California who posed as an uncle and an aunt of the shipyard worker. Upon investigation, however, no such persons were found to be living at the address listed on the affidavit. The shipyard worker is said to have agreed to pay \$5.50 for the birth certificate.

It would appear that similar fraudulent practices have occurred recently, and local registrars of vital statistics are urged to advise all applicants for birth certificates, for births that occurred in other States, to write to the local and State registrars of vital statistics in those States.

CHANGES AMONG HEALTH OFFICERS

Dr. C. O. Bishop of Weaverville has been appointed Health Officer of Trinity County to succeed Dr. Maurice L. Lubin.

The Bi-County Health Unit comprising Yuba and Sutter counties has taken over the administration of public health in the City of Wheatland.

"It is axiomatic that the quality of health service is dependent upon the character and training of personnel responsible for rendering it."—Mayhew Derryberry.

MORBIDITY***Complete Reports for Certain Diseases Recorded for Week Ending June 27, 1942****Chickenpox**

552 cases from the following counties: Alameda 68, Contra Costa 7, Fresno 11, Kern 14, Kings 1, Los Angeles 276, Monterey 7, Orange 7, Sacramento 11, San Bernardino 7, San Diego 37, San Francisco 41, San Joaquin 10, San Mateo 37, Santa Clara 8, Santa Cruz 1, Shasta 1, Solano 2, Sonoma 3, Ventura 2, Yolo 1.

German Measles

374 cases from the following counties: Alameda 42, Contra Costa 5, Fresno 1, Inyo 3, Kern 5, Los Angeles 111, Marin 5, Orange 4, Plumas 1, Sacramento 9, San Diego 47, San Francisco 59, San Joaquin 16, San Luis Obispo 6, San Mateo 25, Santa Barbara 2, Santa Clara 16, Sonoma 15, Ventura 1, Yolo 1.

Measles

2072 cases from the following counties: Alameda 182, Butte 21, Colusa 1, Contra Costa 71, Fresno 13, Glenn 4, Inyo 37, Kern 54, Los Angeles 861, Madera 3, Marin 4, Mariposa 4, Merced 11, Monterey 61, Napa 7, Nevada 1, Orange 63, Plumas 2, Sacramento 8, San Bernardino 28, San Diego 131, San Francisco 223, San Joaquin 20, San Luis Obispo 5, San Mateo 45, Santa Barbara 20, Santa Clara 90, Santa Cruz 12, Shasta 22, Sonoma 55, Tulare 10, Ventura 2, Yolo 1.

Mumps

899 cases from the following counties: Alameda 73, Contra Costa 31, Fresno 34, Inyo 8, Kern 16, Kings 3, Los Angeles 313, Madera 1, Mariposa 1, Merced 3, Monterey 72, Napa 29, Orange 13, Plumas 1, Sacramento 10, San Bernardino 7, San Diego 123, San Francisco 35, San Joaquin 30, San Luis Obispo 2, San Mateo 5, Santa Barbara 9, Santa Clara 15, Santa Cruz 6, Shasta 3, Solano 3, Sonoma 20, Stanislaus 5, Tulare 21, Ventura 6, Yolo 1.

Scarlet Fever

78 cases from the following counties: Alameda 5, Contra Costa 6, Kern 7, Los Angeles 30, Orange 1, Sacramento 1, San Bernardino 4, San Diego 9, San Francisco 8, San Mateo 2, Sonoma 2, Stanislaus 1, Tulare 1, California 1.**

Whooping Cough

207 cases from the following counties: Alameda 17, Colusa 5, Contra Costa 7, Fresno 17, Inyo 2, Kern 14, Los Angeles 56, Monterey 6, Orange 3, Plumas 5, Sacramento 8, San Diego 17, San Francisco 6, San Joaquin 5, San Mateo 1, Santa Barbara 9, Santa Clara 6, Santa Cruz 1, Shasta 1, Sonoma 9, Stanislaus 1, Ventura 11.

Coccidioides Granuloma

4 cases from the following counties: Los Angeles 1, San Bernardino 1, Tulare 2.

Diarrhea of Newborn (Epidemic)

3 cases from Los Angeles County.

Diphtheria

9 cases from the following counties: Los Angeles 3, Monterey 1, Placer 1, San Diego 4.

Dysentery (Bacillary)

12 cases from the following counties: Kern 2, Los Angeles 7, Solano 2, Sonoma 1.

Encephalitis (Epidemic)

One case from Alameda County.

Epilepsy

36 cases from the following counties: Fresno 1, Los Angeles 19, Napa 1, Orange 1, San Francisco 11, San Joaquin 1, Sonoma 2.

Food Poisoning

7 cases from the following counties: Contra Costa 3, Los Angeles 2, Monterey 1, San Francisco 1.

Influenza

45 cases reported in the State.

Jaundice (Epidemic)

4 cases from the following counties: Kern 1, Los Angeles 1, San Francisco 1, San Joaquin 1.

Leprosy

One case from Los Angeles County.

Malaria

2 cases from the following localities: Los Angeles County 1, California 1.**

* Data regarding the other reportable diseases not listed herein, may be obtained upon request.

** Cases charged to "California" represent patients ill before entering the State or those who contracted their illness traveling about the State throughout the incubation period of the disease. These cases are not chargeable to any one locality.

Meningitis (Epidemic)

8 cases from the following counties: Alameda 2, Los Angeles 3, Monterey 1, San Diego 1, San Francisco 1.

Paratyphoid Fever

2 cases from the following counties: Alameda 1, Los Angeles 1.

Poliomyelitis

2 cases from the following counties: Los Angeles 1, San Diego 1.

Rabies (Animal)

10 cases from Los Angeles County.

Rheumatic Fever

11 cases from the following counties: Los Angeles 8, San Diego, 2, Tuolumne 1.

Smallpox

One case from Santa Cruz County.

Tetanus

4 cases from the following counties: Alameda 1, Contra Costa 1, Los Angeles 1, San Joaquin 1.

Tularemia

3 cases from Los Angeles County.

Typhoid Fever

2 cases from the following counties: Los Angeles 1, Placer 1.

Undulant Fever

5 cases from the following counties: Los Angeles 1, Orange 2, San Bernardino 1, Yolo 1.

The California State Department of Public Health is proud of the members of its staff who have entered the armed forces of the United States. It is with a sense of great pride that the names of the following men who have entered such forces are listed here:

UNITED STATES NAVY

Lloyd P. Bascom
Alcor Browne
O. L. Butterfield
James R. Keefer
Francis J. Lenehan
E. B. Mansfield
Don Roberts

UNITED STATES ARMY

Clark Beckwith
Jules Comroe, M.D.
Leon Comroe, M.D.
Joseph Copeland, M.D.
Sidney F. Dommes, Jr.
Robert Dyar, M.D.
Edward Hirschberg, M.D.
George Husser, M.D.
Edward Maher, M.D.
Julius R. Scholtz, M.D.
Joseph B. Smith

UNITED STATES MARINES

John Cruzan

University of California
Medical Library,
3rd & Parnassus Aves.,
San Francisco, Calif.

